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NOTES AND COMMENTS.

I.

MORMON BLOOD-ATONEMENT.

I HAVE heard of the principle of blood-atonement. I believe in it as I believe in the expiatory power of the Christly sacrifice on Calvary.

In the September number of the REVIEW, Miss Kate Field says: "In replying, Mr. Jos. W. [Jos. A.] West, a Mormon, absolutely asserted that he 'had never heard of such monstrous doctrine as that of blood-atonement.'" Miss Field is *absolutely* mistaken. Neither before the Committee of the House of Representatives, nor at any other time or place, did I ever deny my knowledge of that doctrine. The official report of the committee, compiled by the committee's stenographer, a copy of which is herewith sent to the editor of the REVIEW, contains my remarks in full. In them are but two references to the subject, as follows:

MR. WEST. . . The thrilling, blood-curdling stories told this committee by Mr. Baskin have principally been gleaned from this paper, the *Salt Lake Tribune*. They are not original with him, by any means, but have been collected by the reporters of that journal and published by the *Tribune* Company in various forms, and scattered broadcast throughout this and other lands. Their object has been to arouse a bitter and unrelenting prejudice against the Mormons, and thereby secure what they could not get otherwise—unjust and unconstitutional legislation, placing an insignificant minority, represented by them, in a position to usurp authority and tyrannize over the Mormon people. These stories have been replied to in detail in various publications, and have been proven to be absolutely false. The majority of the statements that Mr. Baskin has quoted as extracts from the religious publications of the Mormon Church, if they are to be found there at all, are certainly not in the form and connection in which they are given by him.

MR. BASKIN. I read from your own Church Bible.

MR. WEST. And you garbled what you read. You did not read what preceded or what followed, but took out independent paragraphs and put them with something else. You did not state the circumstances under which those statements were made or the occasions that gave rise to them. If you had read the whole of the text, it would have presented quite a different phase and meaning. (Page 191.)

MR. WEST. So far as the charges which Mr. Baskin makes against the Mormon Church, of blood-atonement, cutting their throats, etc., for violating Church laws, it is all nonsense. Mr. Baskin knows that it is not so.

MR. BASKIN. I expect you to deny it, of course.

MR. WEST. I challenge you, or anybody else, to come before this committee and say that they know from personal knowledge of any acts of violence of that [Mountain Meadows massacre] or any other kind that the Mormon Church has ever committed. I challenge any man to do it. I have lived in that Territory all my life. I was born in Salt Lake. I am a Mormon, and I can truthfully say that I never heard such a monstrous doctrine taught as that made to appear from the garbled extracts read by this gentleman to the committee the other day. I know it does not form any part of the Mormon faith. I know that the Mormon people do not execute any such penalties against anybody, or any other penalties; that for violations of church laws, members are simply excommunicated from the Church, and nothing more. Our books proclaim that it is

not the province of the Church to execute corporal punishment on any of its members ; that men who offend against the law should be turned over to the law ; that they should render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's. That is the position of the Mormon people in reference to this matter. (Page 204.)

Blood-atonement was not the subject under discussion, and, very properly, I did not attempt its elucidation. My only words concerning it were a rebuke to Mr. Baskin for garbling the texts which he quoted. Miss Field, in turn, willfully attempts to make that rebuke unavailing by mutilating my protest and ignoring its solemn remonstrance. Then the lady proceeds to explain "Mormon blood-atonement," with as little success, if truthful presentation be her object, as she achieved in quoting my plain words.

There is nothing secret in the doctrine, its theory or practice. At most, it is but a logical and pure continuation of the belief of all Christians in Christ's sublime atonement for the sins of a fallen race ; just as that supreme sacrifice is an illustration of the idea under which smoking incense was raised from altars by men of old. Our Saviour's crucifixion was a blood-atonement for sin. It redeems man from eternal death. But there are mortal sins which deprive the doers of the expiation wrought by Jesus ; and the shedding of their own blood is the only sacrifice which can save such guilty ones from an outer darkness which shall endure forever.

In Genesis, it is written : "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." And through our doctrine and covenants, which are the repository of the accepted creed of the Church, God declares : "Thou shalt not kill ; but he that killeth shall die." Miss Field, in one respect, is correct. We are literal believers in God's words. We do not accept hanging as a fulfillment of the sacrifice ; because by that death the murderer's blood is not literally shed. But we distinctly disavow any individual or church right to execute that plain law of necessary blood-atonement. For our doctrine and covenants especially command :

" . . . If any persons among you shall kill, they shall be delivered up and dealt with according to the law of the land ; for remember, that he hath no forgiveness, and it shall be proven according to the law of the land."

Among Christians, no argument can be required to prove that Christ's death was an infinite atonement for the infinite condemnation which flowed from the Adamic sin ; nor to prove, to all who believe in humanity's free agency, that, after having this redemption offered to him, a man can so sin as to lose his claim upon Christ's atonement, and to make his own blood forfeit to eternal justice. Upon no point of religious belief is there a greater cumulation of authorities.

Every act of willful transgression must be followed by its adequate penalty, either in this life or that which is to come. Well will it be for the sinful man if he may atone for his guilt by the loss of earthly comfort, earthly time, or even earthly existence ! Not all sins require an atonement by the shed blood of the wrong-doer. And yet killing is not the only mortal offense. In relation to a certain wicked thing, Saint Paul wrote to the Corinthians :

" . . . Concerning him that hath so done this deed, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, . . . to deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

We believe that after a man has covenanted with Almighty God to hold himself spotless from the sin condemned by Paul, if he fall into that awful wickedness, atonement must be made with his life ; otherwise, the spirit will be lost in the day of the Lord Jesus. Yet not ours is the vengeance, nor ours the right to offer the sacrifice. So far as the Church and its individual members are concerned, the

belief is simply passive. No point of our creed is more strongly enjoined than this, which I quote literally from the doctrine and covenants :

" We believe that all religious societies have a right to deal with their members, for disorderly conduct, according to the rules and regulations of such societies, provided that such dealings be for fellowship and good standing ; but we do not believe that any religious society has authority to try men on the right of property or life, to take from them this world's goods, or to put them in jeopardy of either life or limb, neither to inflict any physical punishment upon them. They can only excommunicate them from their society, and withdraw from them their fellowship."

Brigham Young declares in effect that the law requiring the atonement by blood for the sin condemned to the Corinthians is not now in force among the nations. In the identical discourse from which Miss Field selects a few sentences, he says :

" The time has been in Israel under the law of God, the celestial law, or that which pertains to the celestial law—for it is one of the laws of that kingdom where our Father dwells—that, if a man was found guilty of adultery, he must have his blood shed ; and that is near at hand."

Like the day of Christ's coming, the time for a restoration of the law is not yet here, but it " is near at hand."

Brigham Young said :

" I could refer you to plenty of instances where men have been righteously slain to atone for their sins."

The whole tenor of the context indicates that he referred to the fulfillment of the Mosaic law in ancient times. Speaking on this subject in the same volume, he says :

" I can refer you to where the Lord had to slay every soul of the Israelites that went out of Egypt, except Caleb and Joshua. He slew them by the hands of their enemies, by the plague and by the sword. Why ? Because he loved them and promised Abraham he would save them."

Is there anything blood-curdling in the belief that a merciful God will some time give to men the opportunity to die in the flesh, by the swift stroke of a righteous vengeance, rather than to suffer eternally in the spirit ? Those persons who are shocked by such a doctrine cannot truly understand the significance of Christ's death. For if it be a horror for a guilty body to be broken in behalf of its own spirit, how much more of a cruel injustice to command a divine and sinless soul to suffer the agony of crucifixion to atone for a fall not His own !

Miss Field impales " God's people" upon both horns of a dilemma which she creates in fancy. The dilemma itself has no real existence. We do not deny, and have not denied, a belief in the divinely ordained principle of atonement by shed blood for sin. But we do deny the monstrous absurdities which Miss Field and other writers, equally uninformed, falsely assert to have been committed in the practice of that principle. Where is the inconsistency of our position ?

Miss Field claims our public avowal of blood-atonement. I admit it ; but I declare that nothing can be found in all the accepted creed of the Church which, taken with its context and the circumstances under which it was promulgated, gives us any authority for the literal shedding of human blood, except by legal servants acting under the statutory law of the land. No people hold human life in higher sanctity than it is held by us. Being literal, we accept literally John's words : " No murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." And hence, as all our hopes and aspirations are centred in an eternal life, where we expect the justice

and mercy denied us here, we view with dread and abhorrence the slayer of his fellow-man.

Miss Field claims private avowal followed by secret assassination. This I deny. What proof is there, which any reasonable man would accept, of any murder executed by a Mormon under authority of the Church as a blood-atonement? Absolutely none. Monstrous stories there are in abundance; but not one which its utterers dare to sift. A fierce and gory tale is told, with horrifying details; its sole evidence is the word of some sensation-monger. We dispute it, and challenge proof. The illogical reply—assumed to be unanswerable, and accepted by press, pulpit, and public—is another unsupported tale, utterly foreign to the first, and still more impossible and sanguinary. Miss Field relates the alleged experience of a Mrs. Mansfield. Since last I heard that story, previous to this time, it has been dignified and embellished for the REVIEW. Then the tale was crude; it lacked the pathetic personage of “Daisy”; and nothing was said of the victim’s satin raiment in England. But the betrayal of endowment-house secrets, the worse than cannibalistic murder of the woman, the slaughter of the two young boys,—all were there. The woman’s name then was Maxwell; now it is the more euphonious and aristocratic title of Mansfield. By the way, since first I heard the story the victim’s name has run the alphabetical gamut. But seriously, Miss Field cannot substantiate, by one tittle of credible evidence, the tale she has related. I am aware that the lady could probably find a score of infamous publications retailing such sanguinary falsehoods; but a charge of murder—especially against an unpopular people, about which the world is anxious to hear and ready to believe any accusation, however monstrous—should be based upon truth absolutely irrefragable. Instead of quoting approvingly from the dime novels on Mormonism, a conscientious investigator ought rather to join in the sentiment of the old worthy Walter Curle Winton, who said in a court sermon, more than two hundred and fifty years ago:

“And it were heartily to be wished that of all such scandalous . . . books and pamphlets that are daily vended amongst us, such as are fraught full of nothing but pestilent and bitter malice, and the most shameless, desperate untruths that the devil, the father of lies, can help to invent, there were a fire made of them, . . . the flames whereof perhaps might expiate some part of the authors’ offenses, which otherwise would one day help to increase their torment in hell-fire.”

Tales of “blood-atoning” are not seriously related by old, reputable, and honest residents here, of any sect or party; nor are these stories told to such persons. The falsehoods are entered as second-class matter, “exclusively for transmission abroad.” In Utah, no denial is needed of these bitter and infamous falsehoods. Every year since the pioneers entered the waste valley of the Great Salt Lake, there have been occasional apostasies from the Church; men have been led away in search of wealth, in fear of persecution, in dread of popular opinion, and some in a conscientious disbelief. Among these apostates are men who once ranked as most faithful members of the Church. Some of them are men of high personal character. They include lawyers, doctors, merchants. All the doings of the Church must have been known to them. There have also been respectable Gentiles engaged in business here since early days. All these men have been at liberty to speak at any hour, under full protection of the judicial and military powers. If, as Miss Field says, “human blood was shed on the slightest provocation,” why have not these men, well-informed residents here, spoken to the world? No sympathy for the Church restrains them; for many of them are religiously, politically, socially, and financially opposed to its adherents.

Why are these accusations always made anonymously, or by some uninformed stranger, or by some person excommunicated from the Church for his own impurities, or by some vindictive and dishonest creature who has a personal hatred or a desire for notoriety to gratify? Why?—because no man of standing and integrity, neither Gentile nor apostate Mormon, will lend his name to a charge which cannot be sustained.

If responsible anti-Mormons *know* anything of any murders committed in the name of blood-atonement, or in any other way, by authority of this Church, let them speak and prove. But as to the belief of the Mormon, let him be his own spokesman. Haeckel is a better exponent of his peculiar principles than is a science-disdaining fanatic. The "rules of the society of people called Methodists" are studied by a sincere investigator from the words of Wesley and his successors; not from the jealous and vindictive tirades of their haters. Eugene Sue's novel may be entrancingly terrifying in its description of the power exercised by the Jesuit Rodin and his coadjutors; but honesty does not accept "The Wandering Jew" as an official statement of Catholic creed and practice. And even Ignatius Loyola is allowed to speak for himself when one candidly weighs the precepts of the Society of Jesus.

Heretofore, adverse writers and speakers have appeared to deem it an act of the highest virtue to garble Mormon creed and Mormon utterance. Even a lady, holding the high position of Miss Field, has not hesitated to distort words which she heard from Mormon lips, evidently deeming that she commits no wrong thereby. It is usually the case that the publisher who cheerfully gives space to a wholesale and unauthenticated charge against us, has no room for an explicit denial. I hope to see the day when the same care will be used in reporting and construing the utterances of Mormons that is required for Methodists or Catholics.

JOSEPH A. WEST.

II.

THE LAST CONFEDERATE KILLED.

In conversing with General Sherman about the article entitled "A Slave Trader's Letter Book," in the *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* for November, General Sherman said that he believed the writer of the letters, C. A. L. Lamar, was the last Confederate killed in the late war. He said that the fact could be ascertained by asking General Wilson, now of Wilmington, Del. A note to General Wilson brought the following reply:

DEAR SIR: In reply to your letter of November 11th, I have to say that "Charley Lamar," the owner of the yacht "Wanderer," at one time said to have been used as a slaver, was killed by a stray shot in the streets of Columbus, Georgia, on the night it was taken by my command. He was the last conspicuous man, of whom I have any knowledge, killed during the rebellion.

Columbus was taken on the night of April 16th, 1865. * * * *

JAMES H. WILSON.